



# EP Newsgram

Promoting Cultural Understanding Through Communication

## EP Students Unravel Stereotypes in Fourth International Broadcast

*Our fourth historic Empower Peace broadcast was held on June 6, 2006 between students in California and Lebanon*



▲ Students from Lebanon and California take part in the fourth Empower Peace live broadcast

**O**n June 6, 2006, the Empower Peace initiative branched out to a new venue, connecting students from Milikan Peace Academy in Long Beach, California, to their counterparts at Brummana High School in Brummana, Lebanon. On both sides, students were counting down the days until Summer vacation, all the while excited about the opportunity to interact with what they thought to be their complete opposites, but they would soon find out that this was far from the truth. The main focus of this 90-minute broadcast which commenced with a special message from former United States President Jimmy Carter was to address cultural and racial stereotypes in an effort for both sides to better understand one another. The students set the foundation for this discussion by submitting day-in-the-life videos which offered a glimpse into an average school day on the other side of the world. Students from remote locations in New York and Massachusetts subsequently joined the discussion for a round robin question and answer session with the main schools in Lebanon and California. As the exchange continued, it became increasingly apparent from the exchange of comments and laughs that the youth had much more in common than they ever could have imagined. As if to put the icing on the cake, the students from BHS performed a cultural dance set which left the audience and

A Student in Brummana asks students in Long Beach a question about their daily lives



participants speechless! For highlights from the dance performance, visit [www.empowerpeace.org](http://www.empowerpeace.org).

The broadcast also incorporated two special facilitators, both of Lebanese heritage. In California, Lebanese-American actress and political activist Kathy Nijimy; and in Lebanon, actress Zeina Deccache from the LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Channel) lead the discussion in Brummana, where she also spoke about her upcoming trip to the US. Both women spoke about the importance of cultural exchanges such as Empower Peace, as well as the necessity of forums where kids of all ages can address issues such as racial and cultural discrimination. The broadcast was streamed live via the Internet where educators and students worldwide were able to benefit from the live event.



### A Message From Student Ambassador Amine Ghoul

**W**e asked Amine Ghoul, our Brummana High School Ambassador to elaborate on some of his thoughts about the broadcast. The following are some of his comments:

“To begin with, I believe that this broadcast allowed us to communicate with other students our age in many different countries, but more importantly it taught the students in the U.S. many new things about us in Lebanon. I believe the broadcast changed their whole point of view towards Lebanon, and allowed them to see that Lebanon is completely different than any other Arab country.



At first I had an idea of what the event might be but I had no clue it would be this effective and successful considering it to be the first time it happens at Brummana High School. It was an honor to be a host for such an event in order to help encourage such an event to take place again in the near future... Such events are important in a way that students worldwide become connected in order to learn more about each others' culture, religion, and ways of life.

Finally I would like to mention that it was a great privilege to be part of this unforgettable event. I look forward to being part of another similar event and hopefully students worldwide become more involved in

spreading peace with the help of Empower peace organization. I would like to thank all who participated in making this event successful: Mariam and Asad from the Empower Peace organization, my fellow colleagues, and a special thanks to my principal Dr. Khoury for choosing me as the Brummana High School Ambassador for the event.”

Thank You.

### Spreading the Message of Peace, Without Saying a Word

There was no message which joined the schools together more than the dance presentation by the students of Brummana High School in Lebanon. Participants and audience members alike were in shock as the students performed a mix of hip-hop and break dancing which could be interpreted in any language...

INCREDIBLE!



# Peace Talk with Nader Twal

**W**hat perceptions did you have about the Empower Peace program prior to the broadcast? How have those feelings been validated or changed since the broadcast?

Prior to the broadcast, the only knowledge I had of Empower Peace was from their website. Understanding cultural differences is a very important ideal to think about when it comes to sharing the world we all live in, and I'm not sure that present day interaction between cultures takes into account the shaping of our youth and how that affects their thinking...when youth can share ideas and thoughts with one another through personal contact it gives young people the chance to learn about each other from first hand experience, and not just through text books. Watching them interact offers a window into the future of society. A program that helps bring so many youth of different cultures together is a tremendous accomplishment.

**What do you believe was the most beneficial portion of the broadcast for the students?**

It was amazing to see the reactions from the students when they realized they are in fact very similar and have so many things in common. Dating may be different, but dancing and other hobbies are almost identical. It might have seemed as though some of the English speaking Lebanese students had an advantage in speaking both languages,

but there was no lacking of pride from either group when it came to representing themselves, school, and country.

**As an educator, how do you believe young people can benefit from programs such as Empower Peace?**

The bottom line is simple enough. The technology in today's world allows young people to interact like they never could before and they can use it as a tool and language. Kids can message each other on the computer and cell phone from thousands of miles away instantaneously. Technology has become essential for building bridges through personal interaction and brought the globe onto an even smaller scale. It's very powerful and essential to forging strong friendships to withstand the trials of the future.

**In your opinion, what do you believe the benefit for other academic professionals is to become involved in the Empower Peace program?**

One of the many positives out of Empower Peace is that it ensures a person changes and adapts with the world around them. It might be difficult to adapt with new technology, but if students and academic professionals are going to be successful there has to be understanding between them that education is more than textbooks and reciting facts. Shaping the

future of tomorrow is one of the most important jobs there is and a great responsibility for educators.

**How do you believe the overall broadcast went? Would you suggest any changes or new ideas for future broadcasts?**

The broadcast was a raging success changing the hearts and minds of all those involved. The students even wore their t-shirts the rest of the day and wanted people to ask about what they had done. Some ideas for the future might be having a place for free dialogue and building accountability.

**How would you describe Empower Peace to a colleague?**

Empower Peace is the type of program that gives teachers the ability to do things they never thought possible. Linking academic classrooms to different cultures in the real world helps teachers grow and expand their ability. Empower Peace gives it a hands on feel through actual experience, teaching lessons not possible in the traditional classroom.

**Do you have any additional comments?**

Just a big thank you...we'd love to do this again! I'm not looking for a particular date, just looking for a marriage of ideals.

This is consistent with what Milikan Peace Academy is all about, please come back!

## Contributors to Peace Kathy Najimy

**E**mpower Peace was honored to have worked with Kathy Najimy, Lebanese-American political activist and actress at our last broadcast from Long Beach, California to Brummana, Lebanon. Known best for her roles in the movies Sister Act and Hocus Pocus, as well as serving as the voice of Peggy Hill on the animated television show King of the Hill, Najimy is avidly dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of others.



Beach, California. Her middle-eastern heritage made her a wonderful facilitator with her witty and informed commentary. Empower Peace would like to thank Kathy for her dedication to peace throughout the world, and her dedication to the Empower Peace program.



▲ Empower Peace Staff members Tricia Raynard (L) and Tara Haggett (R) with Kathy Najimy at Long Beach High School in California

## Coming Soon

For more information about Empower Peace, check out the our web site at:  
[www.empowerpeace.org](http://www.empowerpeace.org).

- Women2Women Conference
- EP Radio
- Detroit to Dubai

Educators Worldwide - Join Empower Peace TODAY! Log on to: [www.empowerpeace.com](http://www.empowerpeace.com)

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